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## CONTACTS

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** Darren Thwaites  
0191 201 6468  
[darren.thwaites@trinitymirror.com](mailto:darren.thwaites@trinitymirror.com)  
**NEWSDESK:** 0191 201 6331  
**FEATURES:** 0191 201 6132  
**MR JUSTICE:** 0191 201 6202  
**PICTURE DESK:** 0191 201 6125  
**SPORTS DESK:** 0191 201 6203  
**CIRCULATION:** 0191 206 7400  
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# Party Lines

NORTH POLITICS WITH JON WALKER

## May has learned lessons of EU vote



■ Chancellor Philip Hammond is expected to help the "disaffected middle"

BREXIT will dominate this week's Autumn Statement.

Prime Minister Theresa May's determination to ensure the government gives more help to people who are "just about managing" is evidence of that.

Because it shows that she has learned the lessons of the UK's vote to leave the EU in June.

There were many reasons why people voted for Brexit. But in many cases it was because they felt the system just wasn't working for them.

And that doesn't mean that people were poor and dispossessed, or felt they had nothing to lose.

You can have a decent job in this country and still feel unhappy with the way the system treats you.

Because for many people, there's a sense that those at the top are doing well – even if they break the rules, for example by failing to pay their fair share of tax.

And there's a sense that those at the bottom are getting plenty of help.

But people in the middle, who do the right thing and take care of themselves and their family, are left to fend for themselves.

They're not getting the rewards they deserve. Their standard of living isn't going up – and it may be going down.

And things might be even harder for their children.

These concerns aren't confined to the UK. They help explain why Donald Trump became US President. His

Democrat opponent, Hillary Clinton, appeared to offer more of the same, while Trump offered change.

People who want to know why Trump won should consider that, rather than simply labelling his supporters as racist.

Having said that, whatever motivated his voters, Trump himself is a pretty unpleasant person.

So perhaps we should be grateful that here in the UK, there is a mainstream and reasonably sensible politician who gets it.

I'm talking about Theresa May. Whatever you think of her or the Tories, she's no Donald Trump. And she seems to understand that unhappiness with the way society is moving can't just be ignored.

So in the Autumn Statement on Wednesday – one of the government's major annual financial statements – we will see measures to help Brexit Britain.

These are likely to include a further freeze on fuel duty for motorists.

There may be more free or subsidised childcare.

The government is likely also to increase the income tax threshold, effectively cutting income tax for many people.

There's one caveat, however.

The Chancellor, Philip Hammond, doesn't have a lot of money to play with, because nobody yet knows for sure what impact Brexit is having on the economy.

## North MP defeats boundary bid

THE government was defeated in the House of Commons over its plan to cut the number of MPs and redraw boundaries, thanks to North West Durham MP Pat Glass.

She introduced legislation axing the current boundary review.

And it received its "second reading" in the

House of Commons – a key stage in becoming law – after MPs voted in favour of the Bill.

The success was a result of the Labour MP winning support from the SNP and other opposition parties. Even some Tories quietly stayed away.

But the Bill will be killed off eventually by the

government before it becomes law.

Pat Glass wanted to scrap plans to cut the number of MPs in the House of Commons from 650 to 600.

The North East currently has 29 MPs, but this number will be cut to 25 under the government's proposals. And

many MPs will serve strange constituencies. Some Northumberland residents will find themselves part of a new Newcastle North West constituency.

Meanwhile, some Newcastle wards in the city's south west will become part of the Blaydon constituency.



■ Pat Glass MP